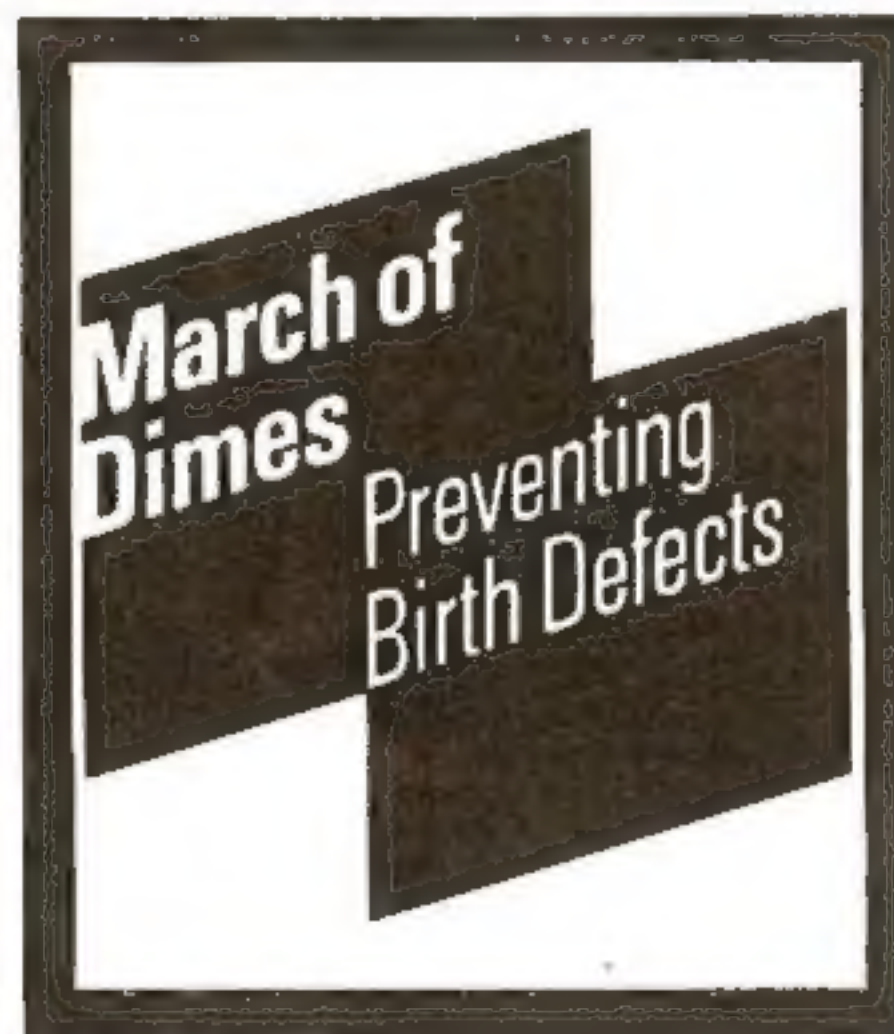




PLAIN TALKS

June 1988



Volume 67

Number 5

Mailbox	3
GSU group forecasts economic outlook	4
Customers benefit from Nelson joint venture	5
1987 was a rough year, Draper tells shareholders	6
GSU walkers shine for March of Dimes	7
Doug Blevins, Craig Lee compete in Boston Marathon	11
Summertime increases demand for GSU's Winnie District	12
Land management study preserves nature, protects lines	13
Employees benefit from Financial Aid to Education	14
News Briefs: Writers tour, operators certified, CARE given	15
Lake Charles Division celebrates Contraband Days	16

E. Kelly Merritt



Officials from CITGO, Conoco, Vista and Gulf States sign 45 pages of documents marking the formal agreement to participate in a joint venture project using Nelson Station Units 1 and 2. Seated at the end of the table is GSU Chairman and President Linn Draper. Regulatory Law manager Don Clements, standing at right, organizes the papers. See page 5 for details.

On the cover, Gulf States employees and their families got together to walk for the March of Dimes in four separate Walk-a-thons around the service area. For more details and photos, see pages 7-10.

PLAIN TALKS

June 1988

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Employees who change residences or offices should fill out company mailing-address-forms (GSU0012-00-81) and return them to the mailroom in the Edison Plaza. GSU publications, departmental mailings and other company information are not automatically forwarded; addresses must be corrected when employees move.

MAILBOX



Exemplary employees

"It is nice to know that there are people who take such an interest in servicing your customers," writes Linda Christen of Carl's Construction and Remodeling Co. The company had problems after its furnace failed. "After several phone calls and interminable transfers, I finally spoke with **Mamie Burrell**. She was most understanding, courteous and helpful, and primarily, she listened to my rather lengthy explanation rather than transferring me . . . prior to being aware of the nature of my call. Between Ms. Burrell and **Mary Ann Maloney**, we had our heat back on in a very short time with warm feelings toward these two exemplary employees," Christen writes. Burrell and Maloney are Baton Rouge customer contact clerks.



Larry Crile

Heart touching honor

"Thank you for the honor your employee, **Larry Crile**, showed my stepfather," writes Vidor resident Mary Kilmer. Crile was in a bucket working on a line along Main St. in Vidor when the funeral procession for J.W. Garrett drove by. Crile removed his hat and stood facing the procession. "It was an act of kindness that will always be remembered. It touched our hearts," Mrs. Kilmer writes.

Crile is a serviceman-1st class.

Beaumont is alive

Beaumont City Manager Albert Haines sends the following letter to GSU Chairman and President **Linn Draper**.

"On behalf of all of us here at the City, please accept my sincerest appreciation for opening your doors and participating in the pre-summit activities and in the overall success of Economic Summit II.

"We are extremely proud to have you help us send the message that Beaumont is alive, working, thinking, creative, and moving ahead with our future. Thanks to you, citizens saw that in Beaumont our vision of a better tomorrow is the first step in making it happen.

"Again, thank you for your time, your interest, and most of all your dedication to our community."

Unqualified success

River City Festivals Association assistant director Dudley-Brian Smith writes to thank **Wayne Hiter**, marketing superintendent, and **Jim Glascock**, industrial representative, for the help given by them and GSU during the Louisiana Celebration in Baton Rouge. "We could not have done this event without your cooperation," Smith writes.

Love and concern

"Dear friends at GSU," writes Hazle Mixon, wife of the late retiree **Sam Mixon**. "Words just cannot express my gratitude to all of you for your help to Sam and me. The love and concern that you all expressed by your efforts and your contributions means so much to us. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Baton Rouge retiree **Calvin Oubre** and the Baton Rouge Sideliners Club raised \$2,013 during a dinner benefit March 24 at Louisiana Station to help pay for Mr. Mixon's medical costs. Mr. Mixon died May 23.

Care of the elderly

Steve Torgeson of the Calcasieu Council on Aging writes **Clyde Mitchell**, customer affairs coordinator, to thank the employees of Gulf States for their continued support of Project CARE. "The fact that the Lake Charles Division increased its giving by 10.8 percent and that it had a 92 percent employee participation rate shows that they do care about the elderly; this in the face of personal economic stress," Torgeson writes.

"We are proud," he continues, "that the Lake Charles Division was tops in giving and participation throughout the Gulf States system. The Council on Aging will continue to work with you to help those in need and strive to make this a better community for all."

Deeply impressed

Reverend Perry Busby, Jr., Pastor of Borden Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Beaumont, sends the following letter to Dr. Draper.

"This is to inform you that as a Texas ratepayer, I am deeply impressed with your concern for the consumers of your company services.

"For the past several months through the mass media of television, newspaper coverage and most of all your personal letters, you have put forth a concerted effort to keep us properly informed as to what is transpiring in the area of rate increase, the actions of the PUC, the actions of the Louisiana Public Service Commission and the River Bend project.

"I must admit there have been times when I, too, became frustrated and disenchanted with GSU because of the increased rates and the Louisiana River Bend project, but through your communications I have certainly become better informed in these matters.

"Because of the economical crisis we all face, we are all concerned about frugality.

"Again, may I say, thank you for sharing this much needed information."

Betty Dickschat



Ernest Henderson

Most honorable

Below is an excerpt from a letter sent by Elizabeth Simmons of Navasota to district superintendent **Louis Sandidge**.

"Recently, while I was out doing errands, I lost my purse from my car. I retraced my steps and searched and searched, but the purse was not found. It contained \$50 and a number of credit cards as well as my driver's license, proof of insurance and many other important papers which would have been most difficult to replace.

"I despaired of ever recovering these things and was resigned to my loss when I heard a knock at my door. Gulf States employee **Ernest Henderson** had come to return my purse after finding it on the highway where I had driven earlier in the day. The contents of my bag were completely intact.

"Mr. Henderson declined any reward saying he had seen the purse beside the highway, recognized the name inside and promptly brought it to me.

"I am most grateful to Ernest and I felt that you should know that this employee of yours is a most honest and honorable person."

Henderson is a Navasota meter reader.

Prompt attention

"We wanted to let Gulf States Utilities know how impressed we were with the prompt attention we received," writes Eric Eisnagule, general manager of the Holiday Inn South in Lafayette. "Your service department is to be commended," he writes.

Forecasts link GSU's growth with local economy

by E. Kelly Merritt

In former days of Gulf States operations, predicting what the next few years would bring in terms of load growth was relatively straightforward. GSU's service area, as well as the rest of the nation, experienced strong electrical growth due to expansion of industry, the formation of new households and the increased use of electric appliances in our everyday lives.

By analyzing trends and using the best methodology of the day, company forecasters could usually count on about 10 percent growth each year. Then came the energy crisis of the 1970's and the good times changed.

"The energy business became more complicated," says Jim Ward, manager of corporate planning. GSU and other electric utilities could no longer rely on relatively constant growth and began to feel the pinch of economic recessions.

Driven by the need for more sophisticated technology, an economic forecast group evolved that is rapidly becoming known, inside and outside of the company, for its regional economic forecasts.

Each quarter since 1987, Altaf Taufique, senior economist; Joe Phalen, economist; and Sunnye Thompson, data analyst; create a detailed economic forecast for a GSU division or large metropolitan area. The group will complete the first series of forecasts when it finalizes the Western Division forecast this summer.

E. Kelly Merritt



By concentrating each economic forecast on a GSU division, the Corporate Planning forecast group can go into greater detail than state or national forecasters. From left are Joe Phalen, Altaf Taufique, Sunnye Thompson and Jim Ward.

Although the division forecasts differ somewhat, the general outlook says that GSU's service area has bottomed out and will see slight growth during the next 10 years.

The link between the economy and Gulf States' health is a vital one. As the economy grows, local industry expands, creating new jobs and income. This causes a ripple effect which increases electrical sales among all customer classes. By using economic analysis for load forecasting, the company is trying to understand the past and make reasonable projections for the future.

Why does the company do its own economic forecasts when it seems the daily news is filled with economic predictions? Detailed local forecasts don't exist, Ward says. Economic forecasts are usually short term, one year or so, and put together at a state or national level.

GSU's forecasts are long term, for 10 years, and tailor-made to each division's unique economic factors. The forecast group has learned in detail the "major drivers" of each region's economy. Such detail is not possible for forecasters on a state or national level. GSU forecasts are also consistent since the forecasters use the same method for each division and have learned how each division interrelates with the others.

Besides helping predict long-

term load demand, the forecasts are useful for many areas of Gulf States' operations. "Just about everybody in the company has used this information at one time or another," Ward says.

Gathering information for the forecasts is complex. "Before collecting data, we talk to the division people to see how things are going," Taufique says. The group looks at the national forecast and meets with industrial customers to determine the "export base" economy. Export base industries serve markets outside of the region and are major drivers for the "local base" economy.

From there, the forecasters reduce the data into a series of mathematical equations and apply basic economic theory. "The process is complicated, but we try to bring it down to qualified judgments," says Taufique. "We quantify as much as we can."

The forecasts have been well received in each division. Taufique notes that a university economics department devoted an entire newsletter to a GSU forecast, chambers of commerce use them for their planning and the business news media in Baton Rouge devoted extensive coverage to the local forecast. "Banks and retail outlets can use this information as well," Phalen adds.

After completing this first series of forecasts, the group will issue quarterly updates.

Everybody benefits from joint venture

by E. Kelly Merritt

After nearly four years of negotiations, Gulf States and three of its major industrial customers signed an agreement on April 28 forming a joint venture company to generate electrical power and supply steam to the industries. Gulf States will operate the new Nelson Industrial Steam Company using Nelson Station Units 1 and 2.

CITGO, Conoco and Vista, each of which operate major plants in the Lake Charles area, will spend a total of \$150 million to replace the two gas-fired boilers at Nelson with circulating fluidized-bed combustion boilers. The new boilers will burn locally-produced petroleum coke.

The joint venture provides major benefits for Gulf States, the participating industries, the local community and GSU's other customers.

By participating in the joint venture, Gulf States retains the electrical load and revenues provided by industrial customers and extends the useful life of the two 28-year-old units. GSU will also gain knowledge and experience with the new fluidized-bed combustion technology.

The industrial participants will benefit through stabilized electrical costs, improving their competitive position and making their local operations more attractive for future growth.

The community will benefit because the venture will provide several hundred construction jobs during the field construction and additional operating employees when the new boilers are in place.

Other GSU customers will benefit because the company retains these industrial customers, keeping the fixed cost of generating electricity spread over more customers.

The project was first proposed in 1984 when Conoco and CITGO informed Gulf States they would begin a cogeneration project burn-

ing petroleum coke, a by-product of their operation. "Initially, they came to us just to give notice that they were doing this project and were going to leave the GSU system," says Jim Richardson, Lake Charles Division superintendent of marketing. "We came back and asked if they would consider using our existing facilities and our know-how and including us as a participant."

Since then, Richardson says, representatives from each company spent a lot of time at solving the intricate details. There were times when the negotiators thought the project wouldn't go through. "On many occasions we felt like we were meeting for the last time," he says. But the group kept working. "Those of us in the core group felt there were basic benefits in this project if we could put it together. We never reached the point where we actually called it off."

Despite the difficulty in reaching an agreement, the hardest part was getting necessary regulatory approvals. The team spent a year

pushing the proposal through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the Louisiana Public Service Commission and the Public Utility Commission of Texas.

What does the project mean for GSU? "Initially, our primary objective was retention of the business," says Richardson. But there are other long-range benefits which are almost equally important, such as exposure to new technology. This could enable us to extend the life of our older generating units and convert to a cheaper fuel.

Another GSU benefit, says Richardson, was the demonstrated effectiveness of the ad hoc project team that combined experience and expertise from different areas within the company. Members of the GSU management team included Don Clements, manager of regulatory and business law, Ken Richardson, former manager of design and engineering, Bobbye Carter, senior industrial analyst, David Beekman, manager of regulatory affairs, and Jim Richardson.

Joint venture facts

- CITGO, Conoco and Vista's Lake Charles operations currently consume about 10 percent of Gulf States' Louisiana electric supply.
- CITGO and Conoco will supply the petroleum coke, about 1,800 tons per day, when the new units are completed.
- The units will generate approximately 200 megawatts of power.
- Gulf States will buy the electricity generated from Nelson Industrial Steam Company and sell grid power to the industrial partners.
- In addition to the two new boilers, a steam line will be added to carry steam to Vista Chemical and perhaps later to Conoco.
- Fluidized bed combustion technology is designed to meet air quality standards by effectively removing sulfur emissions. Petroleum coke is burned in the presence of limestone in a combustion chamber while being circulated by high velocity air. Sulfur released from the burning petroleum coke unites with the limestone to form calcium sulfate ash, a non-hazardous solid. The ash will be disposed of in on-site landfills until a commercial market can be developed.

Draper outlines state of the company

by Mike Rodgers

GSU Chairman and President Linn Draper's speech to shareholders at the 1988 Annual Meeting came several days before the Public Utility Commission of Texas approved a \$62.4 million rate increase for GSU. The commission decision made permanent two interim increases granted previously during the hearings on the rate case, which dragged on for 18 months. At the same time, the PUCT ordered the company to return \$30 million in fuel overcollections to customers over a one-year period. It means a \$30 million revenue shortfall for this year and will require the company to attempt to borrow money to meet financial obligations.

Looking back on 1987, Draper told shareholders the financial results for that year were disastrous. "The revenues declined, the sales declined, the earnings declined from \$1.71 in 1986 to \$1.65 in 1987. The net income declined from \$245 million to \$241 million." Draper advised that although those income figures still sound healthy, they do not represent cash earnings. Removing non-cash items from the earnings statement shows an actual loss of \$149 million in 1987. Summing up the figures on the balance sheet he said, "This is a troubled company from a financial perspective."

Draper recited a list of Project Save Cash measures, familiar to GSU employees, taken to cut expenses during this period which he calls "the most difficult ... in Gulf States history." With these measures and very careful management of finances, he believes we will make it through 1988. Coupled with this prediction, however, was this warning: "I don't believe you should expect that our financial condition is strong enough that we are in a position to pay dividends in

the near future. We have now gone over a year without paying preferred dividends. The obligation to pay preferred dividends that are in arrears is nearly \$100 million. Preferred and preference dividends must be paid by law before we can pay common dividends." He called elimination of the common dividend the most difficult professional decision he has ever participated in and added that their restoration is a high priority.

"Since 1986, about \$30 million of dividends would have flowed into Southeast Texas and South Louisiana — money that suspension of dividends kept out of the economy."

Draper spoke about how the company's financial circumstances are impacting the economy of the service area. Since 1986, about \$30 million of dividends would have flowed into Southeast Texas and Southwest Louisiana — money that suspension of dividends kept out of the economy. During this same period, the market value of shares held by persons living in our service area dropped by over \$90 million.

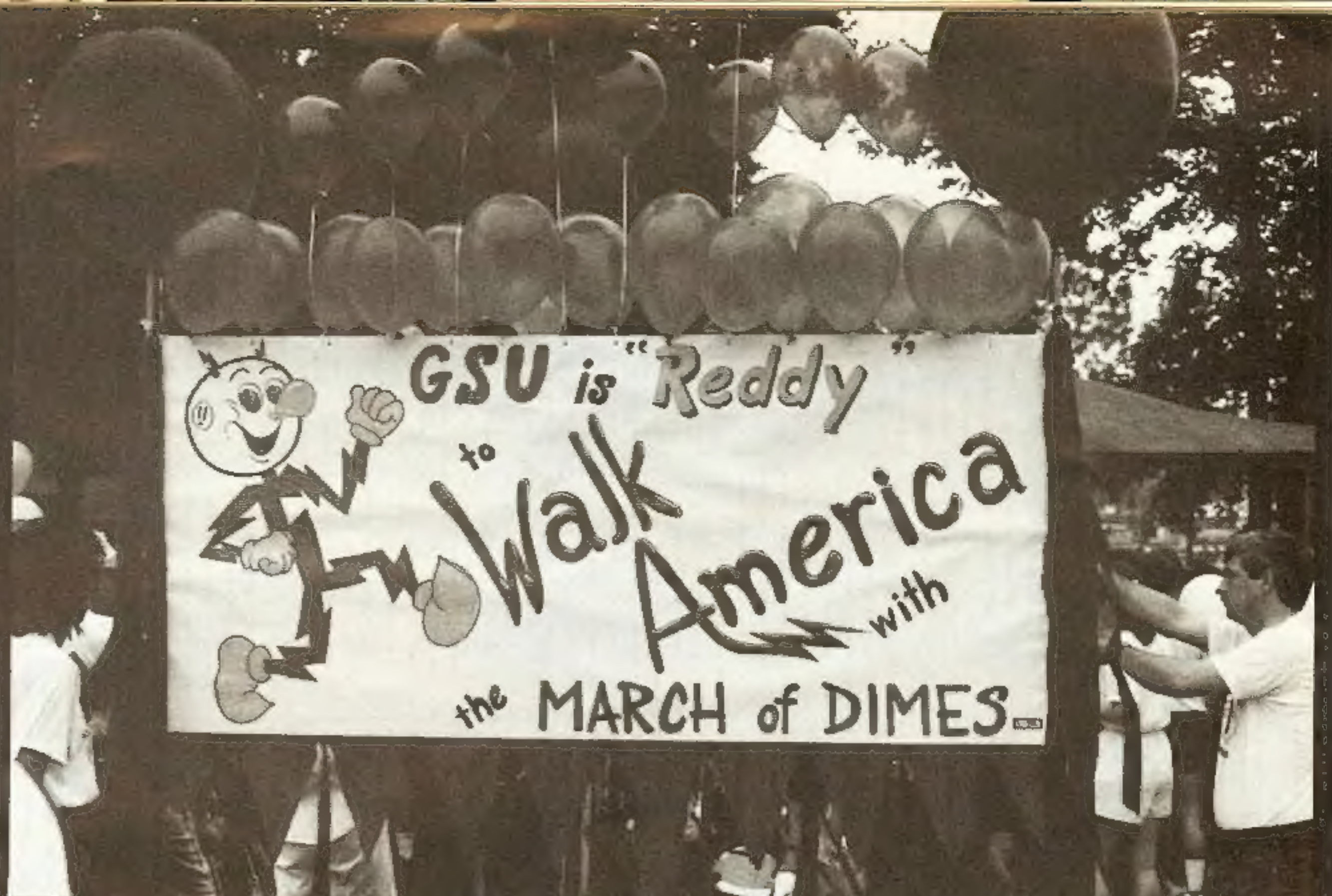
The news was not all bad. On the positive side, Draper pointed to the company's construction budget, down to \$66 million this year from the early 1980's, when it frequently was as high as \$600 million. "We are also in the position of having a good fuel mix," he said, adding, "We are no longer captive to natural gas. In fact, in 1987 gas provided about 60 percent of the generation, coal provided about 25 percent and nuclear about 15 percent." River Bend was shut down

three months last year for its first refueling. This year, the nuclear contribution to the fuel mix could rise to as high as 20 percent.

Draper fielded a number of questions from shareholders when his formal remarks were concluded. Several had questions about restoration of dividends. One shareholder expressed concern about granting stock appreciation rights at a time when dividends were not being paid. Draper responded, "A stock appreciation right is not stock. A stock appreciation right is a right to what amounts to a fictitious share of stock. It has a value of zero unless the stock price goes up. We have for a number of years had various things to try to provide incentives to the executives of the company who work for the benefit of the shareholders to increase the value of your company.

"... In 1986, we eliminated incentive compensation. There are no bonuses to people for extraordinary service. One of the things we can do to encourage people to stay with the company and to get your stock price up, is to give them something that has zero value unless the objective of raising the stock price is achieved ... There were some 130,000 stock appreciation rights granted, but ... none were exercised this year. If the price of the stock doesn't go up from the grant price, people get zero."

Many challenges remain in the months ahead for GSU. Draper mentioned the need to overturn the unfavorable decision by the Louisiana Public Service Commission disallowing \$1.4 billion of the cost of River Bend. In Texas, the company must go back before the PUCT with an effective explanation of the \$1.45 billion of River Bend costs which commissioners set aside.



WalkAmerica '88

Photos by Julie Artherholt, Lisa Didier, Craig Lee, Ron McKenzie, E. Kelly Merritt, Lafayette Miller, Larry K. Noland, Linka Peveto

Gulf States employees came out in droves for the March of Dimes annual WalkAmerica campaign. GSU walkers raised \$38,535 for the March of Dimes this year, the most since 1985.

Donations increased in each division. GSU employees from all five divisions walked in Beaumont, Lake Charles, Baton Rouge and Conroe. In Lake Charles and Beaumont, GSU brought more walkers and raised more money than any other company.

Beaumont walkers saw the debut of the GSU Baby Brigade, a matching group of youngsters, aged three and younger, who rode in strollers, wagons or on their parents' back during the 8.4-mile route.

Plain Talks wanted to print as many employee pictures as possible on these four pages, so we've put together a mini-photo album for you.



GSU'ers walk, ride and roll for the March of D







Two Gulf Staters compete in 92nd Boston Marathon

Two Gulf States employees were among the 6,700 runners in the 92nd Boston Marathon on April 18. Doug Blevins, serviceman-1st class-Orange, and Craig Lee, senior engineering assistant-Port Arthur, ran the 26.2 mile course for their fourth and first times, respectively.

Blevins completed the course in 3 hours, 16 minutes, his second best time in his four consecutive runs. Lee's time was 3:03, seven minutes ahead of his goal.

Marathoners who complete the race in less than four hours earn a pewter "finishing medal" embossed with the year and race number. Blevins' goal is to have a set of 12 medals from consecutive races. If successful, the medal from his final race will read "100th Boston Marathon, 1996." "I hope to have each medallion up to 100 if I can stay healthy and if my body doesn't deteriorate," he says. He will be 54 in 1996.

After five years of running, Blevins is accustomed to the hard effort necessary to train for a marathon. In preparing for Boston, he ran 40 miles per week, much of

it on the Cow Bayou bridge in Bridge City. Running the bridge 14 times each training day amounted to seven miles of "hill" training. The Boston Marathon is run over a hilly course.

For the summer, Blevins plans to run 30 to 35 miles per week for "maintenance training." In August, he will increase his weekly running to 50-60 miles to train for the Houston Tenneco Marathon in January.

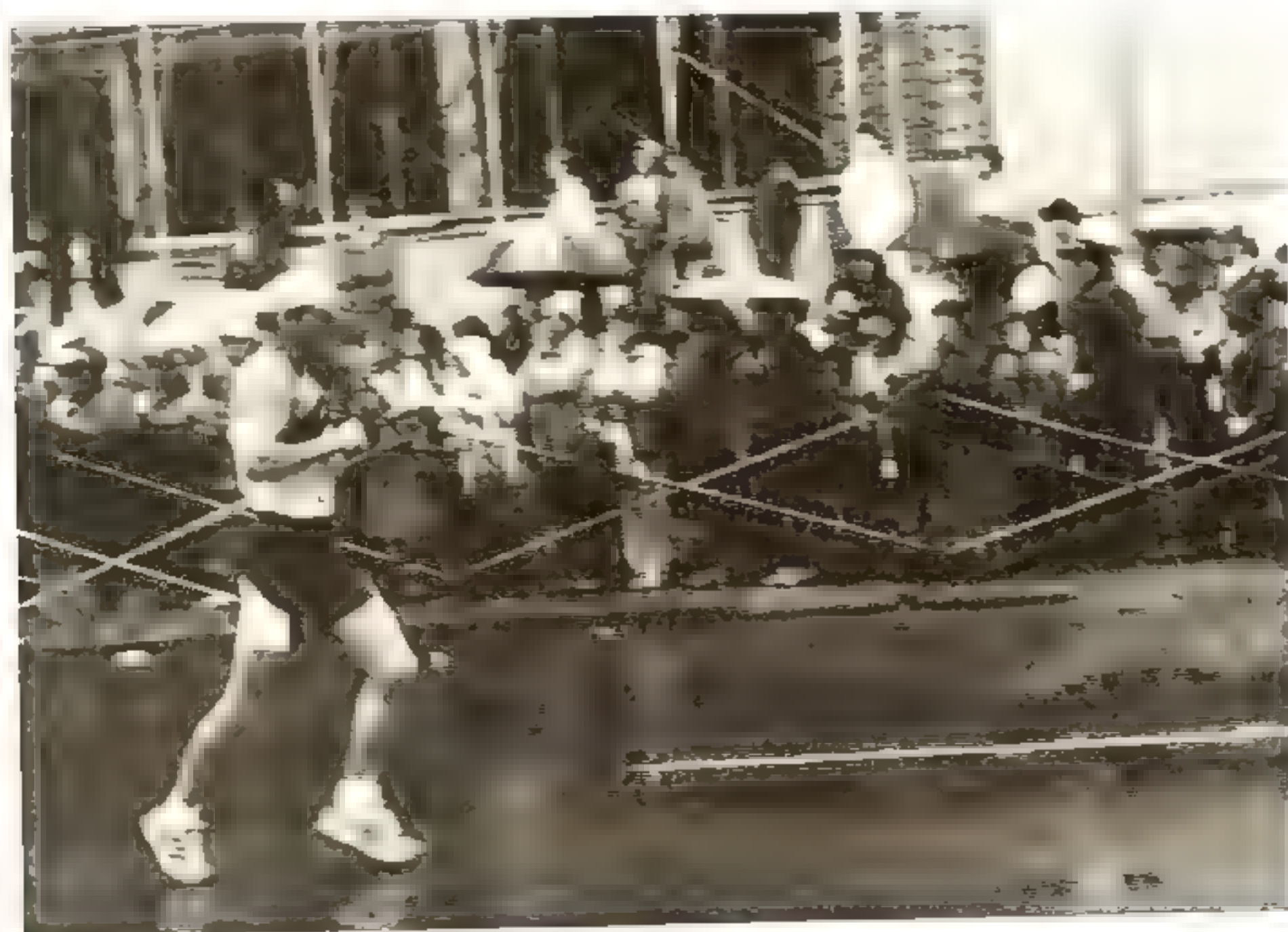
Unlike Blevins, Lee has no plans for future Boston Marathons. "I think once is plenty. I'm satisfied with what I've done." Lee says he likes the variety and competition of track meets and shorter races.

Lee followed an eight-week training regimen for the marathon. He averaged running 45 miles each week, concentrating different days on speed training, hill training (the Cow Bayou bridge), organized races and weight training.

The two runners are close friends and made the trip to Boston together. Since Blevins was the veteran of the group, he served as tour guide for Lee and his wife, Mary.



At left, the crowd cheers as Craig Lee runs by in the rain. Above, Doug Blevins near the finish in a previous Boston Marathon.



Surf's up! And so is electricity usage at the beach

Robert Adams



Simple beach camps along Crystal Beach have given way to fully-furnished beach homes such as this one serviced by Jim Milliff, serviceman-1st class.

by Robert Adams

Only someone who has spent time near Crystal Beach, Texas, on the Bolivar Peninsula knows how easily things rust there. The highly corrosive atmosphere treats GSU's equipment with no kindness, adding special problems for the district employees, especially during GSU's seasonal load peak.

Buddy Johnson, superintendent-Southern District, says the corrosion problem may be caused by the prevailing wind direction and several rivers that deposit silt into the Gulf of Mexico nearby. "Whatever the reason," says Johnson, "we have it even worse than Galveston, just a few miles down the coast."

Frank Nance, district supervisor, talks about the special problems the beach atmosphere gives to GSU. "We believe we are the only place in the whole company that uses all copper service cable," says Nance, "since aluminum connections corrode and go bad. And then there are the salt storms."

Not really storms at all, the

"storms" occur when salt coats the insulators and pole hardware during unusually dry and windy conditions. The coating causes faults along the length of the only transmission line serving the peninsula's 5,500 customers. "We have so many faults hit at the same time that we treat the condition just like any storm damage. We ask for extra crews to help repair the line," says Nance.

Maintaining good service becomes more important during the summer when crowds of people flock to the beach. Electricity usage jumps over 180 percent from the lowest usage in the winter to the July peak, according to Johnson.

"The large crowds appear on weekends," says Johnson, "and during the summer we shift our troubleshooters to a Tuesday to Saturday schedule to handle trouble calls."

He adds that new homes being built add to the electric load at a faster rate than in years past. "The trend now is to beach homes," says

Johnson, "instead of beach camps. Even modest homes cost \$30,000 to \$40,000 and use about five tons of air conditioning. And they have washers and dryers — all the modern appliances."

Johnson says that GSU has added about 250 new customers since 1985, many of them people who plan to retire at the beach. He adds that, as the number of customers goes up, the company must maintain the reliability.

"Several years ago, we changed all of the hardware on the 290 transmission poles in two days," says Johnson. "I think we had over 50 crews here for that job and had the customers out for only about four hours each day."

Recent improvements include the addition of a new transformer to handle increased load. The company is testing aluminum meter cans and stainless steel transformers to see if they can stand up to the rigorous climate better than the steel currently in use.

GSU receives honor for land preservation

by E. Kelly Merritt

Gulf States Utilities in April became the first corporation to be awarded membership in the Texas Land Stewards' Society. The honor, recognizing those who voluntarily protect the natural landscape, was given by the Texas Nature Conservancy, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving unique and significant natural areas.

GSU was honored for sponsoring a study to determine ways to control vegetation growth along a right of way that runs through the Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary, a 2,178-acre biological preserve in the East Texas Big Thicket. The preserve is situated north of Beaumont on ancient sandy deposits along Village Creek. It is unique because it offers a mix of arid sandylands, lush wetlands and sloping forests.

The project began in 1982 when the conservancy voiced concern that spraying by Gulf States might harm rare plants growing along the 138-kilovolt line that crosses the sanctuary. GSU then granted the conservancy \$20,000 to study alternative ways of managing the growth.

"We saw the need to work up our own management strategy," says Ike McWhorter, manager of the sanctuary. The first five years of the project were successful, McWhorter says, so Gulf States agreed in 1987 to continue the project for another five years — without the \$20,000 grant.

The goal of GSU and the conservancy is to get nature to do the work of keeping the lines clear by encouraging low-growing plant communities. Vegetation such as thick grasses, shrubbery and scrub trees naturally prevent tall-growing trees from establishing and, later, damaging the power lines.

E. Kelly Merritt



Ike McWhorter stands among low growing shrubs on an experimental plot under a GSU transmission line. In the plot behind him, a Chinese tallow and a young pine tree grow to a height which, if left alone, would eventually threaten the lines above.

"We are trying to find economical ways to ensure reliable electrical transmission and maintain the natural diversity of the land," McWhorter says. "When we develop these, we hope we can continue to use them. Hopefully (Gulf States) can use them on other rights of way."

McWhorter worked with system forester Phil Waller to devise experimental treatments for each of the five land types along the right of way. The experimental treatments include prescribed burning, chemical application, selective cutting, mowing or a combination. To find out the treatments which would work best, McWhorter divided each land type into several plots and applied a different treatment to each plot. "Some areas we find we don't have to do anything," he adds.

The success of the experimental treatment is clearly visible in some areas of the right of way. Other areas, however, are not so clear.

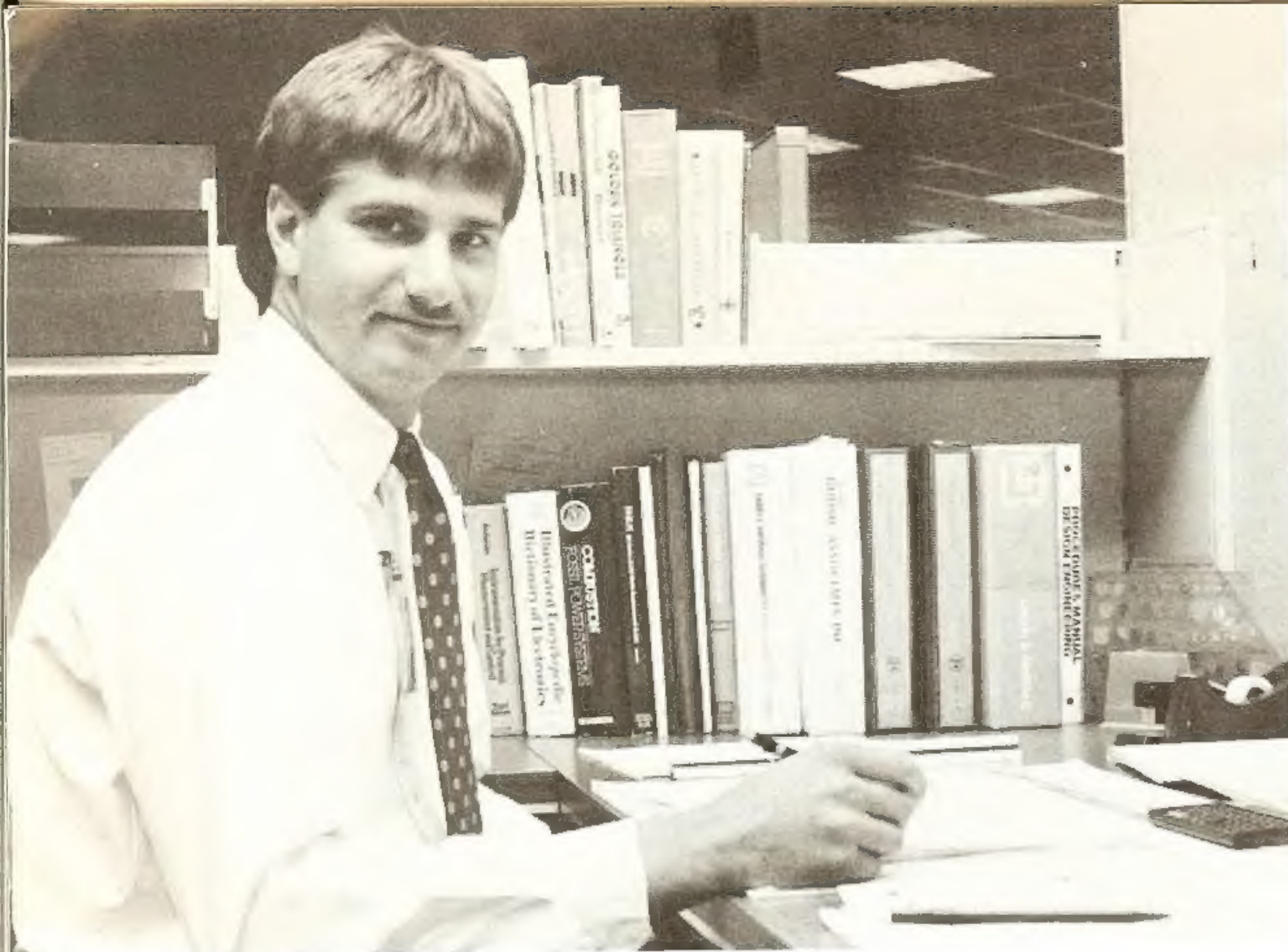
McWhorter pointed out a plot where thick grass and blue-jack oak have established. Blue-jack oak is a scrub tree that usually

doesn't grow tall enough to endanger the 35- to 40-foot-high lines. This growth was encouraged at the beginning of the study by a prescribed burning method that killed most of the pine saplings. After five years, he says, the only management needed for the 3-acre plot was to hand-cut about 100 small pines, a task completed by one person in less than an hour.

That treatment worked well on the sandy uplands of the sanctuary where blue-jack oak thrives. But, McWhorter has not been as successful in the flood-plain forest next to Village Creek. Other land types along the right of way are the slope forest, baygall community (low swampy area) and lowland flatwoods. Each land type supports different plant communities that require different management.

This is not the first involvement with the Sandyland Sanctuary for Gulf States. GSU donated 40 acres to help establish the preserve in 1978.

GSU Chairman and President Linn Draper accepted the award at the Sandyland Sanctuary Friends' Day on April 16.



Brian Beach

E. Kelly Merritt



Charles Jenkins

Wayne Pitre

Employees continue their education through GSU benefit

by E. Kelly Merritt

The song *Graduation Day* could have been going through the heads of many Gulf Staters this May and June as they graduated from college or completed other advanced education programs.

Among those was Wayne Pitre, Nelson Station test technician-1st class. He earned a diploma from the Institute of Electronic Technology in Lake Charles.

Pitre took advantage of Gulf States' Financial Aid to Education program, an employee benefit that partially refunds the cost of tuition and books for employees who complete courses which are job related.

Pitre went to class three nights a week, four and one-half hours a night for a year to earn the certificate, an accomplishment that he says "wore me out." He enrolled in the program after reading about it in a newspaper. "I knew it would help me with my job, so I said 'Why not?' I had nothing to lose and a lot to gain."

Even though Gulf States reimbursed him for 75 percent of the cost, Pitre says, it wasn't easy. "That was the roughest year of my life." The hardest part, he says, occurred on days he worked 12 hours, then rushed to class without having time to bathe or eat.

Despite the difficulty, he is proud of his education. "I wanted it, so I went after it. Now that I have it, nobody can take it away from me."

Pitre says his plans are to sit out a semester and then go back to college. "I think it is wise for someone to better themselves," he adds. "You never know what the future will bring."

Brian Beach, electrical designer in the Instrumentation and Controls Engineering Group, earned a bachelor's degree in electronic technology from McNeese State University in Lake Charles in December 1987. He was working at Nelson Coal Station in 1984 when he decided to go back to school to add a four-year degree to the two-year sheepskin he already held.

In May, he was promoted to his present job at corporate headquarters, a promotion which he attributes to his degree and his experience at Nelson Station.

During the three and one-half years of night classes, Beach lived a four-part daily routine: work, school, study, sleep. His plans now are "just doing a good job for the engineering group and catching up on what I've been putting off for three and a half years."

Beach says he probably could

have completed his education without the Financial Aid to Education benefit, but it helped. "It's an added incentive to go back," he adds.

Beach and Pitre are just two of the many Gulf States employees who recently furthered their education by taking advantage of Gulf States' Financial Aid to Education program. The program reimbursed 179 employees in 1987.

Among the employees who received degrees this spring:

Brent Dorsey, Corporate Planning, M.B.A., Lamar University.

Betty Gavora, Human Resources, M.S., Lamar University.

Pat Harris, Nelson Coal, M.S., McNeese State University.

Rose Holstead, Purchasing, M.B.A., Lamar University.

Lee Hooker, Nelson Station, diploma, Institute of Electronic Technology.

Kevin O'Neil, Credit and Collections, B.A., Louisiana State University.

Don Pumphrey, Public Affairs, B.S., Lamar University.

Mark Viguet, Public Affairs, M.J., Louisiana State University.

Ron Wheeler, Western T&D, Advanced Law Enforcement Certificate, University of Houston.

14 operators at River Bend receive licenses

Fourteen River Bend Station reactor operators received license certificates from Nuclear Regulatory Commission Commissioner Kenneth Carr during an April 28 ceremony at the plant.

Earning senior reactor certificates were Vernon Carlson, Myra Jones, Glenn Kimmell, Ricky Mayeux, Stephen Radebaugh, Steve Rutledge and Joseph Schippert.

Receiving reactor operator certificates were Melody Chilson, Joseph Clark, Dale Dawson, Guy Patterson, David Weller, William Wicker and Terry Wymore.

The awarding of the NRC license certificates follows a year long intensive training program which taught academic fundamentals, system specifics and control room simulation. The training concluded with a comprehensive two-day licensing examination. The exam consists of a six-hour written test, a six-hour oral and performance evaluation on the control room simulator and a question and answer tour of the plant.

The River Bend control room is staffed by five operators, two of whom must be senior reactor operators. Once certified, the operators must complete a requalification program every two years and pass a comprehensive renewal exam annually to remain licensed.

In addition to the NRC requirements, GSU requires operators to spend one of every six weeks in training to keep them abreast of industry operating experiences and maintain their knowledge and performance levels.

Texas Lake Country, Louisiana Living "Retirement like it's meant to be"

Gulf States is taking a novel approach to economic development by promoting Southeast Texas and South Louisiana as great areas for retirement.

Recently GSU sponsored two separate events to bring magazine writers to the area in hopes they will spread the word about the advantages of retirement living in historic South Louisiana or the Texas Lake Country.

In St. Francisville, GSU sponsored a visit by writers for senior citizen and travel publications to the city's annual Audubon Pilgrimage. The writers toured historic plantation homes and new developments in the area. Baton Rouge Division marketing agent Karen Yates arranged the trip.

In the Western Division, consumer service representative Rick Hatcher arranged for two writers for golf magazines to see the area after the Independent Insurance Agent Open professional golf tournament, formerly called the Houston Open.

Says Conroe marketing supervisor John Browning, "The trip was

terrific. The writers were impressed with the quality of life here and the facilities for golfing, swimming, boating and camping. They were pleased with all the things the area has to offer."

Area merchants helped in the Western Division visit, donating course time, lodging and transportation.

"This is just a portion of our relocation program," Browning says, noting that he is working with community leaders and area chambers of commerce to bring visitors to the area.

"Our focus is to go for the tourism first — attract people into the area — then sell them on the area and get them to retire here," he says.

The reason GSU is leading the relocation project, Browning says, is simple. "If we can fill most of our empty houses, the growth will naturally help our sales. The more we can build up our energy load, the more we can spread out the cost of doing business. The bottom line means holding down electric bills for all customers."

More donations made to Project CARE

Anne Russo, left, representative of the East Baton Rouge Parish Medical Society Auxiliary, hands a check to Dr. Joyce Loudon, administrator of Project CARE funds for the Urban Ministries Coalition, and Donna Bush, senior energy auditor-Baton Rouge. The auxiliary gives annually to a local charity and this year chose Project CARE (Community Assistance Related to Energy) for a \$500 donation.



Lisa Didier

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Contraband Days

Southwest Louisiana area employees got into the spirit of Contraband Days April 26 to May 8. The annual festival celebrates the legend of pirate Jean LaFitte, whose 19th century band of buccaneers hid out in the bayous and lakes around present day Lake Charles between raids on ocean-going ships.

At left, Sulphur employees sport T-shirts. Front row from left, Shelia Fields, Ed Brawner, Jeral Semien, middle row; Sandra Ray, Gloria Hebert; back row, Angie Wilks, Murline Bellard, Pal Sonnier and Velva Teer.

At right, the Lake Charles Credit and Collections department; kneeling from left, Susan Buford, David Herring, Ann Newman, Portia Metoyer, Wanda West, Brenda Ardoin and Monica Thomas. Standing from left, Clyde Mitchell, Carl Fruge, Jackie Breaux, Sheila Gouldin, Marie Pre-jean, Debra Towle, Verneedia Rhodes, Linda Sanford, Ruth Moreau, Becky Watson, Theda Allison, Wanda Baker and F. M. Jones.